

Queer intimations

An interpretation of Cocteau's *boudoir* in Chaimowicz's retrospective

In 2008, French-British artist Marc Camille Chaimowicz set up a rather unusual retrospective show in Amsterdam and Ostend. The retrospective, entitled programmatically '... In the Cherished Company of Others...', was no regular overview of Chaimowicz' artistic production, but comprised a mix of works by himself and by other artists with whom the artist felt he shared a sensibility. However, the exhibition's key piece was *Jean Cocteau (2003-2008)*, Chaimowicz's fictitious reconstruction of Cocteau's bedroom-cum-study. If developing an oeuvre is acting out one's artistic biography, then a visual artist's assembling of a retrospective show is the writing of a (partial) autobiography. The exhibiting of one's lifelong creations has the structure of an intimation that creates a bond of intimacy between the artist and the public. However, because of the perilousness for the artist of such a public exposure, retrospectives are never mere 'objective mirrors' of an artistic career or of a subjectivity, but also always conscious moments of staging and disguising. Already embedded in the very format of a retrospective is the discursive construction of the artist as a author-subjectivity materialized in the oeuvre. With his paradoxical retrospective, Chaimowicz overtly extends this mechanism to chosen works by other artists made to stand-in for Chaimowicz as well. Similarly, the Jean Cocteau interior is a lucid nod to the mechanisms of reading interiors as autobiographies of their inhabitants – these mechanisms are exploited by both the heritage industry, art publishers and artists themselves – as well as a signifier of Chaimowicz's queer universe.

In my paper, I want to interpret Chaimowicz's idiosyncratic retrospective by positioning it vis-à-vis the formats of the conventional retrospective, the self-portrait, and the museumized interior, formats typically constructing public intimacy to different degrees.

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